



277 degrees above absolute zero.

I said All right, we'll take the Circle Line again, and we had another argument about Cunliffe.

I: Look, there's no point in bringing a dictionary when there is no place to put it. You can't use it if you are holding it in your lap with the book on top. We tried that before and it didn't work.

L: Please

I: No

L: Please

I: No

L: Please

I: No

L: Please

I: No

The ideal thing would be to go somewhere with tables, such as the Barbican or South Bank Centre—but it is impossible to go to either without being faced at every turn with bars and cafés and restaurants and ice-cream vendors, all selling expensive appealing food which L wants & we cannot afford.

Please No Please No Please

I thought about another day like the last 17, 10 hours of marvellous wonderful far too young what a genius; I thought about another day like yesterday, more marvellous wonderful far too young what a genius *plus* nonsense about elite bands not to mention 10 hours explaining every single word/visiting toilet inaccessible to pushchair/smiling pleasantly through 273 verses (10 + 0 + -262) of the green bottles song. Could I be sure that he would not start up again at



—263 or rather would anyone familiar with the child offer even straight odds that he would not? No.

So I said All right, forget the Circle Line. We'll take Cunliffe and we'll go to the National Gallery, but I don't want you to say ONE WORD. And no running through doors that say No Entry or Authorised Personnel Only. We've got to be inconspicuous. We've got to look as though we've come to look at the paintings. We've been looking at the paintings and our feet are tired so we're just sitting down to rest our feet. We're just sitting down to rest our feet so we can get up and look at more paintings.

Natürlich, said the Phenomenon.

I've heard that one before, said I, but I put Cunliffe under the pushchair along with *Odyssey* 13–24, *Fergus: Dog of the Scottish Glens*, *Tar-Kutu*, *Marduk*, *Pete*, *WOLF!*, *Kingdom of the Octopus*, *SQUID!*, *The House at Pooh Corner*, *White Fang*, *Kanji ABC*, *Kanji from the Start*, *A Reader of Handwritten Japanese*, this notebook and several peanut butter and jam sandwiches. I put L in the pushchair with *Les Inséparables* and we set off.

We are now sitting in front of Bellini's *Portrait of the Doge*. L is reading *Odyssey* 18, consulting Cunliffe at intervals—*infrequent* intervals. I have been looking at the *Portrait of the Doge*—*somebody's* got to.

I have brought things to read myself but the room is so warm I keep falling asleep and then jerking awake to stare. In a half-dream I see the monstrous heiskaihekatontapus prowling the ocean bed, penteikaipentekontapods flying before it, Come back & fight like a man, it jeers, I can beat you with one hand tied behind my back (heh heh heh). Strange to think Thatcher could work on three hours sleep, five hours & I am an idiot. Should never never never have told him to read all those things—but too late to retract.

I think the guard looks suspicious.

Pretend to take notes.